



THE MEN OF THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER II. GAY GARLAND COMES SADDLE EMPTY.

The night of the 23d of June, 1879, had never been forgotten among us while Earlston house stands. It was the eve of the day when the enemy bested the Brig, and the good blue banner got fayed and reddened with other duff that the brown moss-water. I mind it well, for I had grown to be man-muckle since the day on the Tinklers' Leap. After a day of heat there fell a night like pitch. A southerly wind round the house and round the house, whispering and groping, like a forlorn ghost trying to find his way within.

If there was a shut eye in the great house of Earlston that night, it was neither mine nor my mother's. We lay and thought of them that were over the hill, striving for the Other King and the good cause. And our thoughts were prayers, though there was none to take the book in Earlston that night, for I was never gifted that way. So we bedded, without sound of singing or voice of prayer, though I think Jean Hamilton had done it for the asking.

I lay in my naked bed and listened all the night with unshut eyes. I could hear in my mother's room the boards creak as she rose every quarter hour and looked out into the rayless dark. Maisie Lennox of the Duchrae, and my daughter, now a well grown lass, lay with her; and Sandy's young wife, Jean Hamilton, with her suckling babe, was in the little angled chamber that opens off the turret stair near by.

It befel at the back of 1, or mayhap betwixt that and 2, that there came a sound at the neither door that frightened us all. "Haste ye, William," cried my mother, with great eagerness in her voice, coming to my door in the dark. "Your father is at the neither door, now lighted down from Gay Garland's horse. And I could hear my mother listening above for his foot over the threshold. Yet he came not within, which was a wonder to me. I went out upon the step of the neither door, but my father was not there. Only the same strange chill wind went round the house, sighing and moaning blindly as before, and a snoring white fog blew like moulton from the door. Then my hair rose upon my head and the skin of my brow prickled, because I knew that strange portents were abroad that night.

"What for does your father no come here the house to me?" cried my mother from the stair head. I could hear her clasping and unclasping her hands, for my ears were quick at taking sounds.

"I think he must be gone to the station with Gay Garland, to stall him beside Phil-Phil-Phil." I answered her, for so my father's old white horse was named, because in the young days my father had been at that place on the day when Montrose and his Highlandmen got their setting. This now I saw to be my mother, but, indeed, my thought was far other.

come. I was at the door watching for them coming before ever a grouse cock stirred among the short, brown heather on Ardoch side. I told my mother over and over that without doubt Sandy was bringing father home.

"Gay Garland was a reesty beast!" I said. "Doubtless he started when my father and his foot in the stirrup and has come home by himself!" "Another beast nicht," said my mother, looking wistfully from the little window on the stair, from which she did not stir, "but never Gay Garland!"

And right well I knew she spoke the truth. Gay Garland had carried my father over long to rest with him at the hunker's head, and he had cried my mother again from the room where ordinarily she sat.

Even Jean Hamilton, that was but three years from the west as my mother, for she had her babe at her breast, in which she was happier, because when he cried at least she had something to think about. Three weeks before, in the mid of the sunny days in that noble June, my father, William Gordon of Airds and Earlston, and my elder brother, Alexander, had ridden a long arm in those days to strike with the Stuart, and as I saw them ride over the braid, with thirty Glenlivet blue bonnets at their feet, I thought that I was looking upon the beginning of the ruin of our house. Yet I went and hid my face and gaped, for that I was not permitted to ride along with them, and to carry the banner of blue, which my mother, the lady of Earlston, and Jean Hamilton, Sandy's wife, had brooded for their, with words that stirred the heart.

My mother would have added an open bible on the division beneath, but my father forbade. "A sword gin ye like, but no bible!" he said. "So they rode away, and I, that was called William Gordon for my father, clenched hands and wept because that I was not counted worthy to ride with them. But I was never strong ever since Maisie Lennox and I rode home from the Tinklers' Leap; and my mother said that she had more trouble at the rearing of me than with all her other children, for which she meant, as one might say, her brood of chickens.

To me my father cried out as he rode out of the yard. "Abide, William, and look to your mother—and see that the beasts get their fodder, for you are the master of Earlston till I return." "An' ye can help Jean to sew her bairn cloths!" cried my brother Sandy, whom we called the Bull, in that great voice of his, which could cry from Ardoch to Lochinvar over leagues of heather.

And I, who heard him with the water standing in my eyes, because they were going out in their war gear while I had to bide at home, could have clouted him with a stone as he sat his horse, smiling, and shaving the back of his hand with his Andrea Ferrara to stir its edge.

Ob, well ken I that he was a great fighter in Dumfries, where he had a house. He was, indeed, mortally kind of her girldeekes, and had wheaten flour ground at a distant mill for the purpose of making them.

"Mary Hope," he used to say to her, in his daffing way, "your scones are better than your father's law. I wonder who learned ye to bake about Craigloch, a' tho', I grant, mon's the pair mair the father of ye has kept braw and het on a girde while he stirred him about wi' his tongue."

This he said because my mother was a danger to the good of the house, for she had been president of the Court of Sessions in his time, and a very great man in the state.

As I say, this day she set to the baking early, and it went to my heart when I saw she was making the wheaten cakes, raised with sour buttermilk, that were my father's favorites.

She had not been at it long before in came Jock o' the Garpel, hot-foot from the hill. "Maister Alexander," he cried, panting and broken-winded with haste, "Maister Alexander is comin' over the Brae!"

There was silence in the wide kitchen for a moment, only the sound of my mother's feet being heard, "dunt-dunt" on the dough.

"Is he by his lane?" asked my mother, without raising her head from the bakeboard. "Ay," said Jock o' the Garpel, "a' by his lane. No a man rides ahint him."

And again there was stillness in the wide house of Earlston.

My mother went to the girde to turn the wheaten cakes, my father to the fire, and as she bent over the fire there was a sound as if rain drops were falling and hissing upon the hot girde. But it was not the water running down my mother's cheeks, for the love of her youth, for now her last hope was fairly gone.

In the middle of her turning she drew the girde to her, not hastily, but with care and composure.

"I'll bake nae mair," she cried. "Sandy's come over the hill his lane!" And I caught my mother in my arms. (To be continued.)

WHY DOES IT RAIN? The question, "What makes it rain?" especially after long continuous drouth, is very interesting. The atmosphere is largely saturated with water in the form of vapor. This may be a hot, dry day, such as we had last July, when it was so hot and dry that it burned up standing corn throughout Iowa, Nebraska and other western states.

Water in four states, solid as ice; liquid as in water; vapor as in steam; and as a fixed gas, which I will explain. I first observe that the power we know as heat is the power that produces water; water only in the form of steam, and steam, steam superheated by an intenser is transformed into a fixed gas. To prove this, take a vessel full of air, send an electric current through it and it is transformed into drops of water. Experiment shows that a fixed gas, or the atmosphere, may be changed into water by a hot, dry day, such as we had last July, when it was so hot and dry that it burned up standing corn throughout Iowa, Nebraska and other western states.

Let me now collect and place in order these phenomena. As we breathe the full of water in the form of vapor and it holds the air gets too full of vapor and when it cannot hold any more it drops as rain. It joins another, still more unite until a drop has been formed, which falls down just as if it were one drop of water. But some conditions are necessary to the earth parched and the springs dry. Well, what then? Some said last week it seems it cannot rain, the air is so dry. Why, then, the wonderfully wise provision of our beneficent and loving Father comes into play, which I have been trying to explain. An electric shock apparently unbidden, flies through the air, lighting up the heavens, rending the air and shaking the earth, as we so gladly and thankfully witnessed on Saturday night.

THE MOON A BASE DECEIVER Science Knocks the Props from Under Its Pretensions. NO INFLUENCE OVER THE WEATHER Facts Disclosed by Extensive Observations Throughout the World—Dry and Wet Moons a Childish Fiction—Signs that Fail.

From time immemorial an almost universal belief has prevailed that the state of the weather is in some way or other controlled by the moon. Rites have been formulated for the purpose of predicting changes in the weather, both from the moon's phases and the date at which they take place. Even so distinguished an astronomer as the late Sir William Herschell is said to have prepared a series of such rules or precepts, which are now known as Herschell's weather tables. And out of this comes the study of supposed lunar influence by farmers and gardeners in most of the acts of their craft.

Inasmuch as the moon is known to assist in producing the tides, it has been inferred that it must likewise assist in the atmosphere and in this way make changes in the weather. The only evidence of an aerial tide is afforded by the increased pressure or weight of the air as shown by the barometer, and observations made in various localities and extending over more than half a century, show that if an aerial tide exists at all, it is exceedingly slight, the change in the height of the mercurial column of the barometer being less than one thousandth of an inch. An aerial tidal wave of the moon's attraction has therefore practically no existence.

Meteorological observations have been made for more than a third of a century in Europe and elsewhere, for the express purpose of ascertaining the number of rainy days in the waxing and waning moon, and the results in every instance have been unsatisfactory and inconclusive. Thus in southern Germany it was found that during a period of twenty-five years the number of rainy days in the waxing moon (from new to full moon) was to the waning moon (from full to new moon) nearly as six to five, while in the south of France the ratio was as nine to eleven; and nearly opposite results were secured at Paris. There has been the same experience in America and the observations have proved nothing. Where nearly the same results were obtained in two or more different localities they only indicated coincidences, not consequences. It may therefore be safely concluded that changes of the moon have no influence in producing rain.

Equally worthless is the tradition that the crescent of the new moon when nearly horizontal foretells a wet month and when nearly vertical a dry month. These positions of the moon's crescent must occur every nineteen years and are a necessary consequence of the moon's having the orbit it has, the change from one form of the crescent to the other being very slow and gradual. Those who are willing to accept these signs do so from the coincidences they may have happened to observe, carefully noting the instances which have proved the sign and neglecting those that do not.

They are in fact convinced because they desire to be convinced of what really possesses no foundation whatever. Observations made with the view of determining whether or not the moon produces any other changes in the weather have given contradictory results. Thus 100 new moons were followed by fifty-eight wet and fifty-two dry; 100 full moons by sixty-three changes and 100 quarters by sixty-four changes. This might seem to show that the new moon is followed by the fewest changes and this is contrary to what is commonly believed. In short, all scientific observation goes to prove that the moon has no influence whatever over the weather.

Practical meteorology can hardly be said to have attained to the rank of a science, however. We know very little about the causes which bring about changes in the weather. Until our knowledge of electricity and magnetism is vastly extended, our forecasts of the weather must be in the majority of cases, mere guesses. We understand the cause of the trade winds; but we cannot explain the whirlwind in our streets, much less can we say a day or even an hour in advance when and where the next cyclone will strike. Wind and rain storms follow no known law; they are variable and capricious, being influenced by numerous local causes, such as oceanic currents, mountain chains, deserts, large lakes, extensive forests, etc., to which may be added temperature, moisture and electrical conditions. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth."

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ON THE STEP OF THE NETHER DOOR. frightened hen, and dropped almost to the ground. Yet, though I am delicate and not overly well grown in my body, I do not count myself a coward, even though my brother Sandy's courage be not mine.

SANDY COMES OVER THE HILL ALONE. The House of Earlston sits bonny above the water-side, and there are few fairer waters in this land than the Ken water. Also it looks its bonniest in the early morning when the dew is on all sides and a stillness like the peace of God lies on the place. I do not expect the kingdom of heaven very much to surpass Earlston on a Sabbath morning in June when the bees are in the roses. And, indeed, I shall be well content with that.